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ABSTRACT

A study of the relationships between some religious factors and attitudes toward education in a rural community in northern Colorado is reported in this paper. The sample of 105 persons interviewed was drawn from a household population of 556. The data was gathered by means of an interview schedule which included various demographic data, open end questions, 2 inventories, and 7 attitude scales. In the analysis of the data, authoritarianism and religious orthodoxy were found to be significant predictors of attitudes toward education, but these factors were found to have a negative relationship to education. Conclusions drawn from the analysis indicate (1) that either the area being studied is in a change cycle or that the area does not fit the regional patterns of education being of high status among the religious biased people, and (2) that the high negative relationship between religion-authoritarian factors and education was possibly owing to the current, at least felt, radicalization of the university campuses. (PS)

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RELIGION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD
EDUCATION IN A RURAL COLORADO COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to report a study of the relationships between some religious factors and attitudes toward education in a rural community. Variables tested dealt with religious orthodoxy, religious activity, age, sex, length of time in the community, occupation (status and Agrarian or Non-agrarian), authoritarianism, and attitudes toward education.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this study the following definitions are used:

Agrarian: Anyone who is currently agricultural or agricultural related in employment or who has extensive agrarian relationships (e.g. a young farm-raised wife.)

Non-Agrarian: Anyone not fitting the definition of Agrarian.

Authoritarianism: That quality of attitude measured by the California F Scale and Relating to a specific personality type. (Srole, 1956)

Religion Orthodoxy: That quality of attitude concerning attitudes toward tradition in religion as measured by the Putney, Middleton scale. (1961)

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THEORETICAL STRUCTURE

The utilization of the statistical methods employed in this paper (see below) resulted in exploring a research problem using empirically related variables to construct a model. Instead of utilizing the traditional theory-hypothesis procedure, we have chosen to follow Glasser and Strauss (1966) and proceed towards social theory instead of away from it. Therefore, the theory structure is practically non-existent--composed of a simple research question. This question is simply what is the relationship between the above stated variables. This can also be stated as: Do the predictor variables employed in this study effectively predict attitudes toward education.

THE SAMPLE

The sample was drawn from a household population (556) of a rural community in Northern Colorado. The sample of 105 was given a sample reliability of over 99 per cent. The persons interviewed were "adult-in-the-home." In the sample were 31 non-agrarian households and 74 agrarian oriented homes. The sampling method used was a random map segment method following Cochran (1963). Times of interview were staggered to account for working hours and days off. Both German and Spanish speaking interviewers were utilized to overcome language barriers. (In both types of language barriers the problem was not that of understanding but of obtaining interviews and after a bi-lingual approach was utilized no problems were encountered using English for the interview schedules. This eliminated a separate statistical evaluation of a translated interview schedule -- although, a set of translated schedules was developed.)

METHODS AND STATISTICS

The data was gathered by means of an interview schedule which included various demographic data, open end questions, two inventories, and seven attitude scales. (The scales were randomly mixed to provide a filler question technique for preventing response set.)

The scales utilized in this study were used to: measure attitudes toward education--modified from one previously used by one of the authors (Gillings, 1969: 115-116); authoritarianism--a modified California F Scale (Srole, 1956); and religious orthodoxy (Putney, Middleton, 1961). (The authors are aware of the criticisms leveled at this latter scale, regarding reliability.) The form used for this study had 0.96 (N-31) and 0.98 (N-40) reliability correlations on a test-retest.

The statistical analysis was done by multiple regression analysis. The variables were first treated as a single statistical model. Then the variables were dropped out, individually or in related groups. The model equation followed the form of:

$$\hat{Y} = a_0 + x_1 a_1 + x_2 a_2 + \dots + x_n a_n$$

ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data, authoritarianism and religious orthodoxy were found to be significant predictors of attitudes toward education. The other variables (age, occupation, educational level, agrarian-nonagrarian, length of time in the community and sex) did not yield significance but should not be totally discounted as they were important in the overall picture. However, the model did not show significant drop in the R^2 (variance) except when the authoritarian and religious orthodoxy variables were deleted from the full model.

TABLE OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

<u>MODEL</u>	<u>Variables Deleted</u>	<u>Sum R²</u>	<u>F Ratio</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Full	None	0.2820	3.69	0.0005*
	#1 (Authoritarianism)	0.1849	12.71	0.0009*
	#2 (Religious Orthodoxy)	0.1722	14.38	0.0005*
	#3,4,5 (Church participation)	0.2735	0.56	0.5793
	#6-13 (Demographic)**	0.2434	0.84	0.5427

*Significant

** Age, Education level, Occupational level,
Sex, Length of time in community, Agrarian--
Non-agrarian.

This apparent relationship between attitudes towards education and religious orthodoxy is of great interest and is one which is not expected. The expected relationship would be just the opposite as the community studied is at the endge of the Inter-Mountain region of the United States which has a regional norm of favoring education--primarily due to the strong influence of the Mormon subculture. (O'Dea discussed this in what he terms 'work, health, recreation, and education complex.") This also contradicts the findings of Nelson and Forst (1971) who found a higher than expected positive value orientation toward education--which they termed "curious." Apparently the studied population is neither Appalachian oriented nor Inter-Mountain. Therefore, we must conclude the attitudes toward education in regard to religious orthodoxy are not following regional patterns but are related to authoritarian patterns.

With a mean educational attainment of 11.36 years, the expected reaction of the entire community should have been more favorable but this seems to be contradicted. The possible explanation is that the recent student unrest has reduced favorable attitudes toward education. (One of the most "notorious" "radical universities" in the United States is within an hour drive of the studied community and two other moderate size universities are within twenty minutes drive.) the proximity of the "radical student" coupled with the authoritarian attitude of retention of the status quo (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1945) may account for this problem. Combining this with the findings of Putney--Middleton (1961) which found students with orthodox beliefs tended to be more authoritarian and the finding of Martin and Westie (1959) which indicate a rise in authoritarianism results in a reduction of tolerance, we can possibly explain this negativism as being a reaction to the current problems in academia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can only point out that either the area being studied is in a change cycle or that it does not fit the regional patterns of education being of high status among the religious biased people. As we pointed out above, it is possible that the high negative relationship between religion--authoritarian factors and education was due to the current radicalization (at least felt radicalization) of the university campuses. Wooster (1972) further emphasizes this with his findings (on the same sample that acceptance of the alcoholic and drug user is nonexistent with the community studied.

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